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Item 6 (d) of the provisional agenda  
Proposal for new UNECE standards:  
Retail meat cuts

**DRAFT NEW UNECE STANDARD FOR RETAIL MEAT CUTS**

Note by the secretariat\*

The present document UNECE Standard for Retail Meat Cuts has been submitted by the United States of America. This document was prepared following the decision of the Specialized Section to begin work on a standard for retail meat cuts (document ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.11/2008/8, para. 41). Former Chapter 5 of the draft new standard for retail meat cuts is presented in a separate document (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.7/GE.11/2010/7) entitled "Draft new UNECE Standard for retail meat cuts - retail meat cuts descriptions". Both documents include changes discussed at the Rapporteurs Meeting on Retail Meat Cuts (Beef) held in Stillwater, United States from 16 to 20 November 2009. The present document is presented for discussion.

The document is prepared in accordance with paragraph 5 of the Working Party's Terms of Reference.

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\* The present document has been submitted late in order to include information on the latest progress in this work.

## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
1. INTRODUCTION.....	4
1.1 UNECE standards for meat products .....	4
1.2 Scope .....	5
1.3 Application.....	5
1.4 Adoption and publication history .....	5
2. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS.....	5
3. PURCHASER SPECIFIED REQUIREMENTS.....	6
3.1 Additional requirements .....	6
3.2 Species .....	6
3.3 Product/cut.....	6
3.4 Refrigeration .....	7
3.5 Production history .....	7
3.5.1 Traceability.....	7
3.5.2 Porcine category .....	7
3.5.3 Production system.....	8
3.5.4 Feeding system .....	8
3.5.5 Slaughter system.....	9
3.5.6 Post-slaughter system.....	10
3.6 Fat limitations and evaluation of fat thickness in certain cuts.....	10
3.6.1 Fat thickness .....	10
3.6.2 Trimming.....	11
3.7 Porcine quality system.....	12
3.8 Meat and fat colour, marbling and pH.....	12
3.9 Weight ranges of carcasses and cuts.....	13
3.10 Packing, storage, and transport .....	13
3.10.1 Description and provisions.....	13
3.10.2 Packing code.....	14

**CONTENT**

	<b>Page</b>
3.11 Labelling information to be mentioned on or affixed to the marketing units of meat .....	14
3.11.1 Mandatory information.....	14
3.11.2 Additional information .....	15
3.12 Provisions concerning conformity-assessment requirements .....	15
4. UNECE CODE FOR PURCHASER REQUIREMENTS FOR RETAIL MEAT CUTS	16
4.1 Definition of the code .....	16
4.2 Example.....	17

**ANNEXES**

I. Codification system.....	18
II. Addresses .....	23

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 UNECE standards for meat products

The purpose of UNECE Standards for meat products is to facilitate trade by recommending an international language for use between buyer and seller. The language describes meat items commonly traded internationally and defines a coding system for communication and electronic trade. As the texts will be updated regularly, meat industry members who believe that additional items are needed or that existing items are inaccurate or no longer being traded are encouraged to contact the UNECE secretariat.

The text of this publication has been developed under the auspices of the UNECE Specialized Section on Standardization of Meat. It is part of a series of standards which UNECE has developed or is planning to develop.

The following table contains the species for which UNECE standards exist or are being developed and their code for use in the UNECE meat code (see section 4).

For further information please visit the UNECE website at <<http://www.unece.org/trade/agr>>.

Annex I contains a description of the codification system, which includes a specific application identifier for the implementation of the UNECE code.

<b>Species</b>	<b>Species code (data field 1)</b>
Bovine (Beef)	10
Bovine (Veal)	11
Porcine (Pork)	30
Ovine (Sheep)	40
Caprine (Goat)	50
Llama	60
Alpaca	61
Chicken	70
Turkey	71
Duck	72
Goose	73
Edible meat co-products	90
Retail meat cuts	91

## 1.2 Scope

This Standard recommends an international language for raw (unprocessed) retail cuts from domesticated animals marketed as fit for human consumption. It provides purchaser with a variety of options for meat handling, packing and conformity assessment that conform to good commercial practice for meat and meat products intended to be sold in international trade.

To market retail meat cuts across international borders, the appropriate legislative requirements of food standardization and veterinary control must be complied with. The Standard does not attempt to prescribe those aspects, which are covered elsewhere. Throughout the Standard, such provisions are left for national or international legislation, or requirements of the importing country.

The Standard contains references to other international agreements, standards and codes of practice that have the objective of maintaining the quality after dispatch and of providing guidance to Governments on certain aspects of food hygiene, labelling and other matters that fall outside the scope of this Standard. *Codex Alimentarius Commission Standards, Guidelines, and Codes of Practice* [www.codexalimentarius.net](http://www.codexalimentarius.net) should be consulted as the international reference for health and sanitation requirements.

## 1.3 Application

Contractors are responsible for delivering products that comply with all contractual and specification requirements and are advised to set up a quality control system designed to assure compliance.

For assurance that items comply with these detailed requirements, buyers may choose to use the services of an independent, unbiased third-party to ensure product compliance with a purchaser's specified options. The Standard includes illustrative photographs of carcasses and selected commercial parts/cuts to make it easier to understand the provisions.

## 1.4 Adoption and publication history

[Paragraph to be included later]

UNECE standards for meat undergo a complete review three years after publication. Following the review, new editions are published as necessary. Changes requiring immediate attention are published on the UNECE website at: <http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/standards.htm>.

## 2. MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

All meat must originate from animals slaughtered in establishments regularly operated under the applicable regulations pertaining to food safety and inspection.

Carcasses/cuts must be:

- Intact, taking into account the presentation
- Free from visible blood clots, or bone dust
- Free from any visible foreign matter (e.g. dirt, wood, plastic, metal particles <sup>1</sup>)
- Free of offensive odours
- Free of obtrusive bloodstains
- Free of unspecified protruding or broken bones
- Free of contusions having a material impact on the product
- Free from freezer-burn <sup>2</sup>.

Cutting, trimming and boning of cuts shall be accomplished with sufficient care to maintain cut integrity and identity, and avoid scores in the lean. Ragged edges shall be removed close to the lean surfaces. Except for cuts that are separated through natural seams, all cross-sectional surfaces shall form approximate right angles with the skin surface. Minimal amounts of lean, fat, or bone may be included on a cut from an adjacent cut. For boneless cuts, all bones, cartilage, and visible surface lymph glands shall be removed.

### **3. PURCHASER SPECIFIED REQUIREMENTS**

The following subsections define the requirements that can be specified by the purchaser together with the codes to be used in the UNECE retail cuts code (see section 4).

#### **3.1 Additional requirements**

Additional purchaser-specified requirements, which are either not accounted for in the code (e.g. if code 9 “other” is used) or that provide additional clarification on the product or packing description shall be agreed between buyer and seller and be documented appropriately.

#### **3.2 Species**

The species code for retail cuts in data field 1 as defined in section 1.1 is 91.

#### **3.3 Product/cut**

The retail meat cuts listed in this document are recommendations only. Different retail cuts of meat will be added or deleted as necessary as updates of this document evolve. Many of these cuts are traded internationally under the auspices of more than one trade name. The objective of using a harmonized codification system (see annex I) will facilitate the use of this document.

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<sup>1</sup> When specified by the purchaser, meat items will be subject to metal particle detection.

<sup>2</sup> Freezer-burn is localized or widespread areas of irreversible surface dehydration indicated, in part or all, by changes from original colour (usually paler) and/or tactile properties (dry, spongy).

The four-digit product code in data field 2 is defined in section 5.

### 3.4 Refrigeration

Meat may be presented chilled, frozen or deep-frozen. Depending on the refrigeration method used, tolerances for product weight to be agreed between buyer and seller. Ambient temperatures throughout the supply chain should be such as to ensure uniform internal product temperatures as follows:

Refrigeration code (data field 4)	Category	Description
0	Not specified	No category specified
1	Chilled	Internal product temperature maintained at not less than – 1.5° C or more than +7° C at any time following the post-slaughter chilling process
2	Frozen	Internal product temperature maintained at not exceeding – 12° C at any time after freezing
3	Deep-frozen	Internal product temperature maintained at not exceeding – 18° C at any time after freezing
4 – 8	Codes not used	
9	Other	

### 3.5 Production history

#### 3.5.1 Traceability

The requirements concerning production history that may be specified by the purchaser require traceability systems to be in place. Traceability requires a verifiable method of identification of porcine animals, carcasses, cartons and cuts at all stages of production. Traceability records must be able to substantiate the claims being made and the conformity of the procedures must be certified in accordance with the provisions concerning conformity-assessment requirements in section 3.12.

#### 3.5.2 Porcine category

Porcine category code (data field 5)	Category	Description
0	Not specified	No category specified
1	Hog/Barrow	Castrated male porcine
2	Gilt	Female porcine, unfarrowed
3	Hog/Barrow and/or Gilt	Porcine

<b>Porcine category code (data field 5)</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>4</b>	Sucker	Young porcine less than 15 kg (hot carcass weight), head-on
<b>5</b>	Boar	Mature intact porcine
<b>6</b>	Sow	Female porcine that has farrowed
<b>7</b>	Young pig	Young porcine less than 35 kg (hot carcass weight), head-on
<b>8</b>	Code not used	
<b>9</b>	Other	

### 3.5.3 *Production system*

The purchaser may specify a production system. In any case the production has to be in conformity with the regulations in force in the importing country. If no such regulation exists, the regulation of the exporting country shall be used.

<b>Production system code (data field 6)</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>0</b>	Not specified	No system specified
<b>1</b>	Indoors	Production methods that are based on indoor housing
<b>2</b>	Outdoors	Production methods that are based on outdoor housing for part of their lives
<b>3</b>	Organic	Production methods that conform to the legislation of the importing country concerning organic production
<b>4 – 8</b>	Codes not used	
<b>9</b>	Other	Any other production system agreed between buyer and seller

### 3.5.4 *Feeding system*

The purchaser may specify a feeding system. In any case the feeding has to be in conformity with the regulations in force in the importing country. If no such regulation exists, the feeding system shall be agreed between buyer and seller.



<b>Feeding system code (data field 7)</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>00</b>	Not specified
<b>01</b>	Conventional
<b>02 – 09</b>	Codes not used
<b>10</b>	FM free
<b>11</b>	FM & IAO free
<b>12</b>	FM, IAO & GP free
<b>13</b>	FM, IAO, GP & GMO free
<b>14</b>	FM & GP free
<b>15</b>	FM, GP & GMO free
<b>16</b>	FM & GMO free
<b>17 – 29</b>	Codes not used
<b>30</b>	IAO free
<b>31</b>	IAO & GP free
<b>32</b>	IAO & GMO free
<b>33</b>	IAO, GP & GMO free
<b>34 – 49</b>	Codes not used
<b>50</b>	GP free
<b>51</b>	GP & GMO free
<b>52 – 59</b>	Codes not used
<b>60</b>	GMO free
<b>61 – 98</b>	Codes not used
<b>99</b>	Other

The definitions of the terms below have to be in conformity with the legislation of the importing country:

FM free	Free from fish meal
IAO free	Free from ingredients of animal origin
GP free	Free from growth promoters
GMO free	Free of products derived from genetically modified organisms.

### **3.5.5 Slaughter system**

The purchaser may specify a slaughter system. In any case the slaughter has to be in conformity with the regulations in force in the importing country. If no such regulation exists, the slaughter system shall be agreed between buyer and seller.

Slaughter system code (data field 8)	Category	Description
0	Not specified	
1	Specified	Slaughter system specified as agreed between buyer and seller
2 – 8	Codes not used	
9	Other	Any other authorized method of slaughter must be agreed between buyer and seller

### 3.5.6 Post-slaughter system

The purchaser may specify a post-slaughter system. In any case the post-slaughter has to be in conformity with the regulations in force in the importing country. If no such regulation exists, the post-slaughter system shall be agreed between buyer and seller.

Post-slaughter processing code (data field 9)	Category	Description
0	Not specified	
1	Specified	Post-slaughter system specified as agreed between buyer and seller
2 – 9	Codes not used	

**Note 1:** Spinal cord removal. Individual market requirements will have specific regulations governing the removal of the spinal cord, nervous and lymphatic tissues. Regulations applicable to spinal cord removal will specify at what stage the carcass and/or cut must have the spinal cord removed. If required, there must be total removal.

**Note 2:** The following common post-slaughter processes, dressing specifications and chilling regimes, may be agreed between buyer and seller. These requirements are not included in the porcine-specific coding.

## 3.6 Fat limitations and evaluation of fat thickness in certain cuts

### 3.6.1 Fat thickness

The purchaser can specify the maximum fat thickness of retail cuts of meat. Allowable fat limitations are as follows:

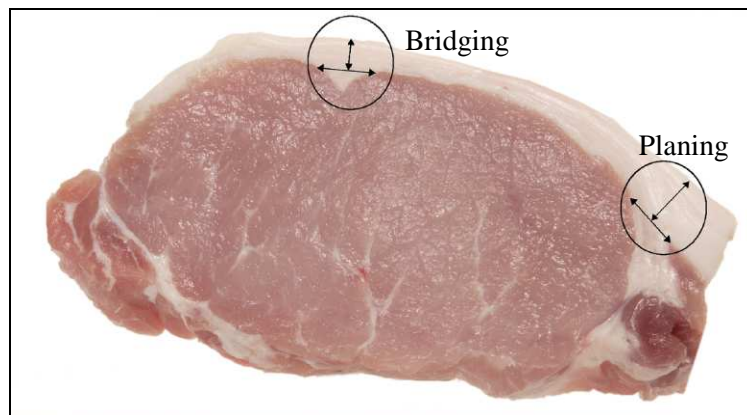
Fat thickness code (data field 10)	Category
0	Not specified
1	Peeled, denuded, surface membrane removed
2	From 0 to 5 mm fat thickness
3	From 6 to 12 mm fat thickness
4 – 8	Code not used
9	Other

**Note:** Location of fat measurements on carcasses to be agreed by buyer and seller (e.g. rib sites). For information on the calculation of the percentage of lean, see section 3.8.

### 3.6.2 Trimming

Trimming of external fat shall be accomplished by smooth removal along the contour of underlying muscle surfaces. Bevelled fat edges alone do not substitute for complete trimming of external surfaces when required. Fat thickness requirements may apply to surface fat (subcutaneous and/or exterior fat in relation to the item) and seam (intermuscular) fat as specified by the purchaser. Two definitions are used to describe fat trim limitations:

- Maximum fat thickness at any one point. Evaluated by visually determining the area of a cut which has the greatest fat depth, and measuring the thickness of the fat at that point.
- Average (mean) fat thickness. Evaluated by visually determining and taking multiple measurements of the fat depth of areas where surface fat is evident only. Average fat depth is determined by computing the mean depth in those areas.



**Figure 1**

Actual measurements of fat thickness (depth) are made on the edges of cuts by probing or scoring the overlying surface fat in a manner that reveals the actual thickness and accounts for any natural

depression or seam which could affect the measurement. When a natural depression occurs in a muscle, only the fat above the portion of the depression which is more than 19 mm (0.75") in width is considered (known as bridging; see figure 1). When a seam of fat occurs between adjacent muscles, only the fat above the level of the involved muscles is measured (known as planing; see figure 1.).

However, when fat limitations for “Peeled, denuded, surface membrane removed<sup>3</sup>” are specified, the bridging method shall be used for evaluating fat above a natural depression in a muscle and fat occurring between adjacent muscles.

### 3.7 Porcine quality system

Note: Bovine, Ovine and Caprine to be discussed.

Porcine quality system code (data field 11)	Category	Description
0	Not specified	
1	Official standards	Quality classifications based on an official quality system of the exporting country
2	Company standards	Quality classifications based on sellers' quality systems
3	Industry standards	Quality classifications based on an industry-wide quality system
4 – 8	Codes not used	
9	Other	Other quality classifications agreed between buyer and seller

**Note:** Any system should meet or exceed the official quality requirements of the consuming country.

### 3.8 Meat and fat colour, marbling and pH

Normally, lean meat and fat, depending on the specific species, demonstrates a characteristic colour and pH. Any specific requirements regarding colour, marbling, and pH need to be agreed between buyer and seller and are not provided for in the coding system.

The specified system requirements will be agreed upon between the buyer and seller. These quality systems may include, but are not limited to, percentage of lean product, marbling, lean colour and

<sup>3</sup> Peeled/denuded, surface membrane removed – when the surface membrane (“silver” or “blue tissue”) is required to be removed (skinned), the resulting cut surface shall expose at least 90 per cent lean with remaining “flake” fat not to exceed 3mm (0.125 inch) in depth.

pH. These different quality standards are based on specifications developed by different countries, companies and/or industries.

### 3.9 Weight ranges of carcasses and cuts

Weight range code (data field 12)	Category	Description
0	Not specified	
1	Specified	Range required
2 – 9	Codes not used	

**Note:** These weight ranges are not available for portion control, but rather a range to delineate the size of cuts being sold

### 3.10 Packing, storage, and transport

#### 3.10.1 Description and provisions

The primary packaging is the primary covering of a product and must be of food grade materials. The secondary packaging contains products packaged in their primary packaging. During storage and transport, the meat must be packaged to the following minimum requirements:

#### Carcasses, split carcase sides and quarters

- Chilled, frozen or deep-frozen with or without packaging

#### Cuts – chilled

- Individually wrapped (I.W.)
- Bulk packaged (plastic or wax-lined container)
- Vacuum-packed (VAC)
- Modified atmosphere packaging (MAP)
- Other

#### Cuts - frozen / deep-frozen

- Individually wrapped (I.W.)
- Bulk packaged (plastic or wax-lined container)
- Vacuum-packed (VAC)
- Other

The conditions of storage before dispatch and the equipment used for transportation shall be appropriate to the physical and, in particular, the thermal condition of the meat (chilled, chilled in a modified atmosphere, frozen, or deep-frozen) and shall be in accordance with the requirements of the importing country. Attention is drawn to the provisions of the *UNECE Agreement on the*

*International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs and on the Special Equipment to be Used for Such Carriage (ATP) (ECE/TRANS/165).*

### 3.10.2 Packing code

Packing code (data field 13)	Category
0	Not specified
1	Carcases, split carcase sides and quarters – without packaging
2	Carcases, split carcase sides and quarters – with packaging
3	Cuts – individually wrapped (I.W.)
4	Cuts – bulk packaged (plastic or wax-lined container)
5	Cuts – vacuum-packed (VAC)
6	Cuts – modified atmosphere packaging (MAP)
7	Layer packed with plastic or wax-lined dividers
8	Code not used
9	Other

### 3.11 Labelling information to be mentioned on or affixed to the marketing units of meat

All labelling information must be verifiable (See also 3.5.1).

#### 3.11.1 Mandatory information

Without prejudice to national requirements of the importing countries, the following table contains information that must be listed on product labels.

- for carcase sides and quarters, the mandatory information must be fixed to the product (stamped and/or tagged).
- for packaged cuts, the mandatory information must be listed on the shipping container.

Labelling information	Carcases, sides and quarters	Packaged or packed meat
Health stamp	X	X
Slaughter number or batch number	X	X
Packaging date		X
Name of the product		X
Use-by date, as required by each country		X

Labelling information	Carcases, sides and quarters	Packaged or packed meat
Storage conditions (see section 3.4 Refrigeration)		X
Appropriate identification of packer, processor or retailer		X <sup>4</sup>
Quantity (number of pieces)		X <sup>4</sup>
Net weight		X <sup>4</sup>

### 3.11.2 Additional information

Additional information may be listed on product labels as required by the importing country's legislation, or at the buyer's request, or as chosen by the processor. If listed, such product claims must be verifiable (see also 3.5.1).

#### Examples of such product claims include the following:

- Country of birth
- Country(ies) of raising
- Country of slaughter
- Country (ies) of processing/cutting
- Country (ies) of packing
- Country of origin. In this Standard the term "country of origin" is reserved to indicate that birth, raising, slaughter, processing/cutting and packing have taken place in the same country.
- Slaughter and post-slaughter systems
- Further processing
- Characteristics of the livestock, production and feeding systems
- Slaughter date
- Processing/packaging date
- Quality/grade/classification
- pH, lean and fat colour

### 3.12 Provisions concerning conformity-assessment requirements

The purchaser may request third-party conformity-assessment of the product's quality/grade/classification, purchaser-specified options of the Standard, and/or animal identification. Individual conformity assessments or combinations may be selected as follows:

**Quality/grade/classification conformity assessment (quality):** a third party examines and certifies that the product meets the quality level requested. The name of the third-party certifying authority and quality grade standard to be used must be designated as noted in 3.1.

<sup>4</sup> This information can also be provided in accompanying documentation.

**Trade standard conformity assessment (trade standard):** a third party examines and certifies that the product meets the purchaser-specified options as specified in this trade standard, except for quality level. The name of the third-party certifying authority must be designated as noted in 3.1. Optionally, the purchaser may indicate specific purchaser-specified options to be certified after the name of the third-party certifying authority.

**Porcine or batch identification conformity assessment (porcine/batch ID):** a third party certifies that the product meets specified requirements. The name of the third-party certifying authority and the requirements must be designated as noted in 3.1.

Conformity assessment code (data field 14)	Category
0	Not specified
1	Quality/grade/classification (quality) conformity assessment
2	Trade standard conformity assessment
3	Porcine/batch identification (porcine/batch ID) conformity assessment
4	Quality and trade standard conformity assessment
5	Quality and porcine/batch ID conformity assessment
6	Trade standard and porcine/batch ID conformity assessment
7	Quality, trade standard, and porcine/batch ID conformity assessment
8	Code not used
9	Other

#### 4. UNECE CODE FOR PURCHASER REQUIREMENTS FOR RETAIL MEAT CUTS

##### 4.1 Definition of the code

The UNECE code for purchaser requirements for retail meat cuts has 14 fields and 20 digits (2 digits not used) and is a combination of the codes defined in sections 3 and 5.

No.	Name	Section	Code range
1	Species	3.2	00 – 99
2	Product/cut	5	0000 – 9999
3	Field not used	–	00 – 99
4	Refrigeration	3.4	0 – 9
5	Category	3.5.2	0 – 9
6	Production system	3.5.3	0 – 9
7	Feeding system	3.5.4	00 – 99
8	Slaughter system	3.5.5	0 – 9



No.	Name	Section	Code range
9	Post-slaughter system	3.5.6	0 – 9
10	Fat thickness	3.6.1	0 – 9
11	Quality	3.7	0 – 9
12	Weight range	3.9	0 – 9
13	Packing	3.10.2	0 – 9
14	Conformity assessment	3.12	0 – 9

#### 4.2 Example

Example for retail cuts [To be included later].

This item has the following UNECE retail meat cut code: **0000000000000000000000**

No.	Name	Requirement	Code value
1	Species		00
2	Product/cut		0000
3	Field not used		00
4	Refrigeration		0
5	Category		0
6	Production system		0
7	Feeding system		00
8	Slaughter system		0
9	Post-slaughter system		0
10	Fat thickness		0
11	Quality		0
12	Weight range		0
13	Packing		0
14	Conformity assessment		0

## **Annex I**

### **CODIFICATION SYSTEM**

#### **1. Purpose of the GS1 system**

The GS1 system is widely used internationally to enhance communication between buyers and sellers and third-party conformity assessment entities. It is an identification and communication system standardized for use across international borders. It is managed by GS1 Global Office, together with national GS1 member organizations around the world.

The system is designed to overcome the limitations of using company, industry or country-specific coding systems and to make trading more efficient and responsive to trading partners. The use of the GS1 standards improves the efficiency and accuracy of international trade and product distribution by unambiguously identifying trade items, services, parties, and locations. GS1 identification numbers can be represented by data carriers (e.g. bar code symbols) to enable electronic reading whenever required in the trading process.

GS1 standards can be used in Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and the GS1 Global Data Synchronization Network (GDSN). Trading partners use EDI to electronically exchange messages regarding the purchase and shipping status of product lots. Trading partners use GDSN to synchronize trade-item and party information in their back-end information systems. This synchronization supports consistent global product identification and classification, a critical step towards efficient global electronic commerce.

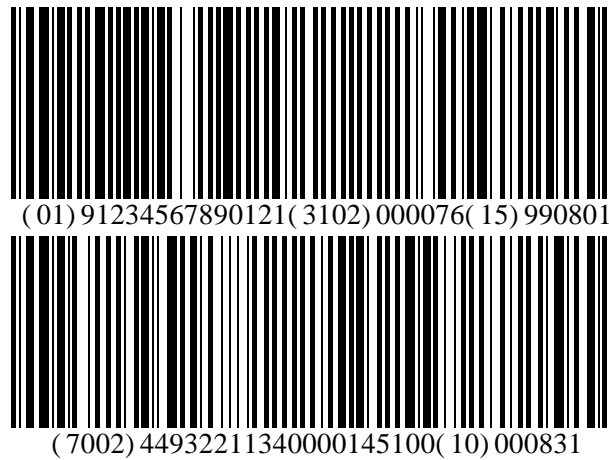
#### **2. Use of the UNECE code in the GS1 system**

GS1 uses application identifiers as prefixes to identify the meaning and format of the data that follow it. It is an open standard, which can be used and understood by all companies in the international supply chain, regardless of the company that originally issued the codes.

The UNECE purchase specification code defined in section 4.1 has been assigned the GS1 application identifier (**7002**) to be used in conjunction with a Global Trade Item Number (GTIN) and represented in the GS1-128 bar code symbology. This allows the UNECE code information to be included in GS1-128 bar code symbols on shipping containers along with other product information (see examples 1 and 2).

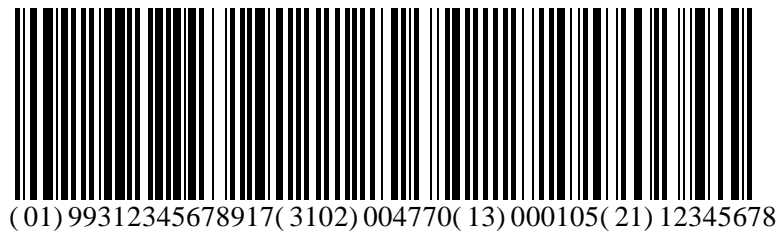
UNECE meat-cut definitions are also being proposed for use by suppliers as an attribute of the GDSN global product classification system. In this way, suppliers can use the UNECE meat-cut code to globally specify the cut of each product GTIN in the GDSN. Once defined by the supplier, all interested buyers will know the exact UNECE cut of each product published in the GDSN (see example 3).

Example 1:



(01)	Global Trade Item Number (GTIN)
(3102)	Net weight, kilograms
(15)	Use-by date
(7002)	UNECE purchase specification code
(10)	Batch number

Example 2:



(01)	Global Trade Item Number (GTIN)
(3102)	Net weight, kilograms
(13)	Slaughter/packing date
(21)	Serial number

Other data, such as the UNECE code, refrigeration, grade and fat depth can be linked to the GTIN via Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) messages.

### 3. Application of the system in the supply chain

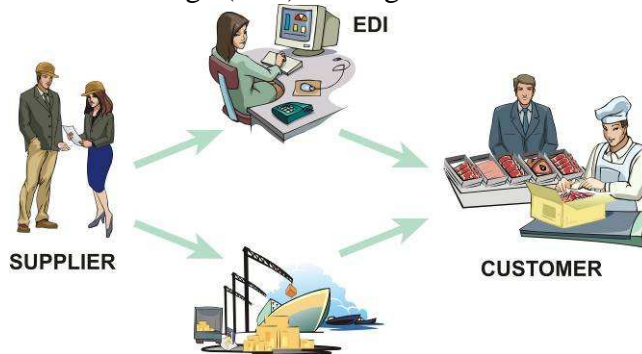
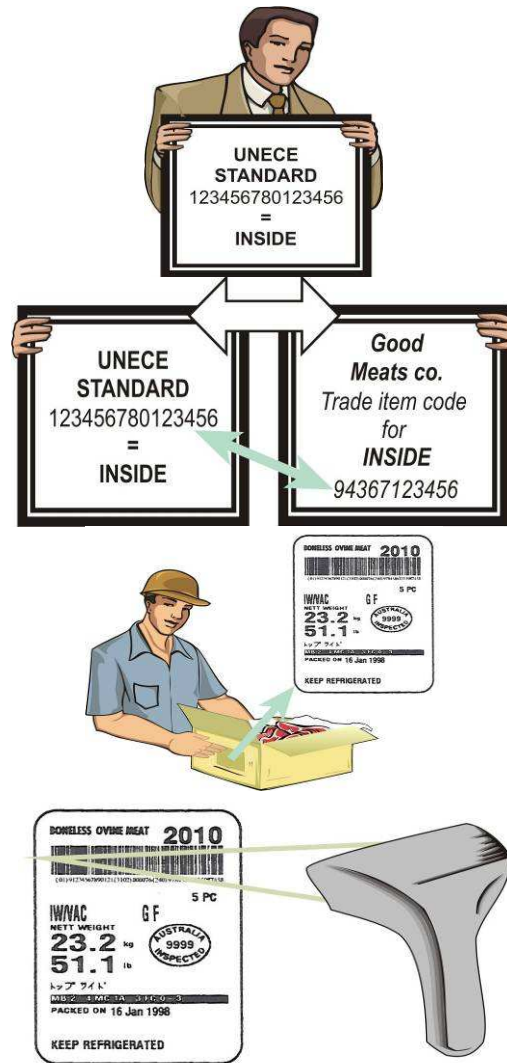
(1) Customers order, using the UNECE standard and the coding scheme.

(2) On receipt of the order, the suppliers translate the UNECE codes into their own trade item codes (i.e. Global Trade Item Number).

(3) Suppliers deliver the order to the customers. The goods are marked with the GS1-128 bar code symbol.

(4) Customers receive the order and the GS1-128 bar code symbol scanned, thus allowing for the automatic update of commercial, logistics and administrative processes.

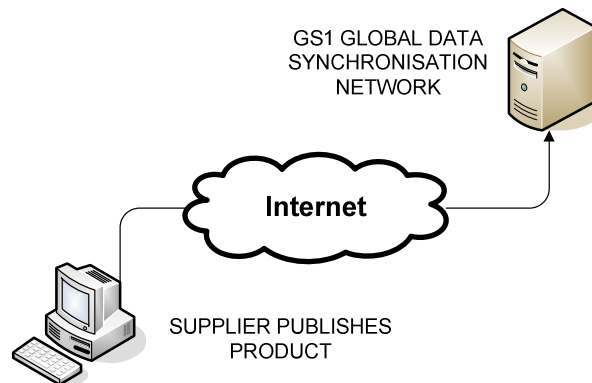
(5) The physical flow of goods, marked with GS1 standards, may be linked to the information flow using Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) messages.



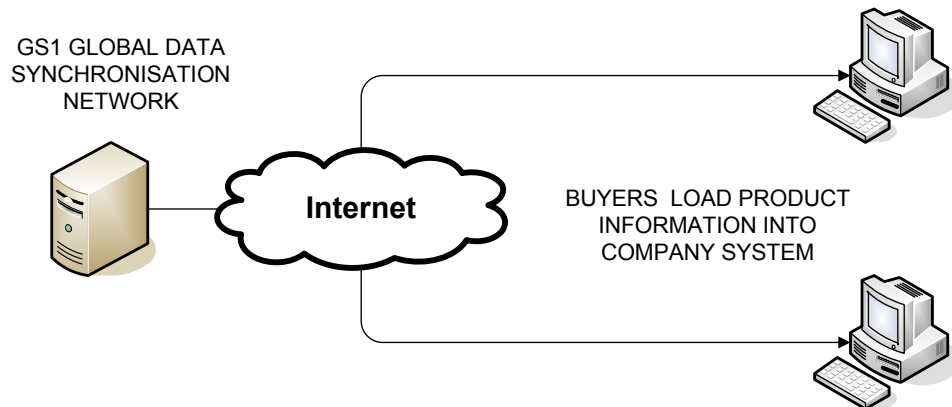
Example 3:

#### 4. Use of UNECE meat-cut definitions in the GDSN

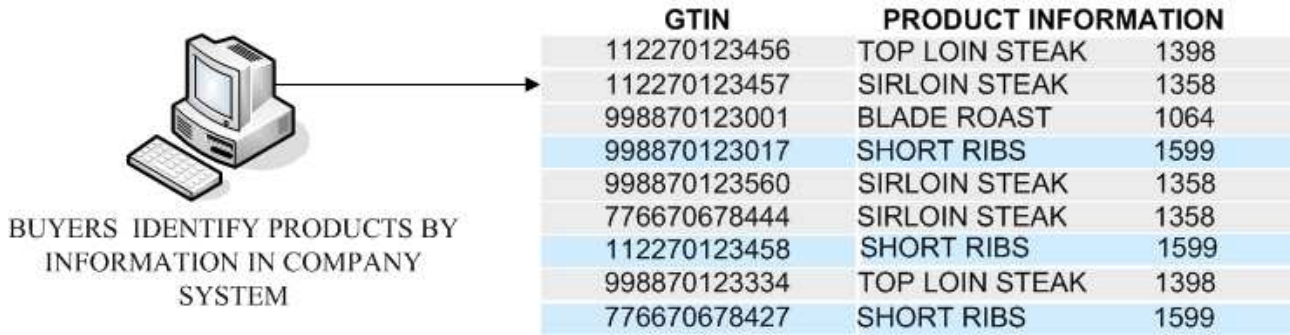
(1) Suppliers publish or update information about a product in the GDSN and use the appropriate UNECE meat-cut definition to define the meat cut of the product using the GDSN meat cut attribute.



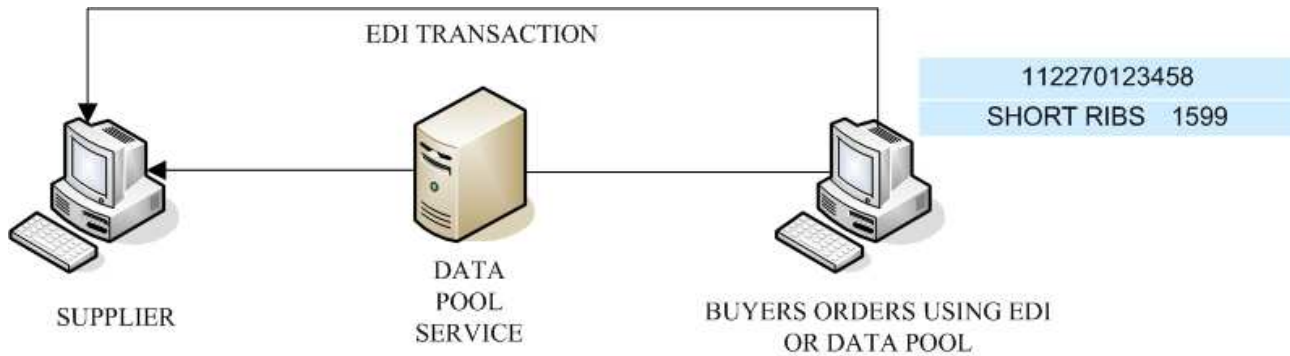
(2) Interested buyers use the UNECE meat cut and other product information published in the GDSN to synchronize product information in their own information systems.



(3) Buyers use UNECE meat-cut information in their information systems to identify by GTIN which products they wish to order.



(4) Buyers use product GTIN and related information to order product from supplier using EDI or GDSN-compatible data pool service providers.



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